

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division
Variance
BZZ-5558

Date: May 24, 2012

Applicant: French Meadow Bakery and Café

Addresses of Property: 2610 Lyndale Avenue South

Project Name: The French Meadow Bakery and Café restaurant expansion

Contact Person and Phone: Steve Shapiro, (612) 612-870-1110

Planning Staff and Phone: Brad Ellis, (612) 673-3239

Date Application Deemed Complete: April 27, 2012

End of 60-Day Decision Period: June 26, 2012

Ward: 10, adjacent to 06 **Neighborhood Organization:** Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Association (adjacent to Whittier Alliance)

Existing Zoning: C4 General Commercial District

Zoning Plate Number: 24

Legal Description: Not applicable for this application

Proposed Use: Expansion of existing sit-down restaurant with limited entertainment

Variance: to reduce the required number of off-street parking spaces from 6 to 0 to allow for the expansion of an existing restaurant within an existing building

Applicable zoning code provisions: Chapter 525, Article IX Variances, specifically section 525.520(6) “to vary the applicable minimum... number of required off-street parking spaces...”

Background: The subject property is an approximately 20,000 square foot lot that contains the French Meadow Bakery and Café and some small offices. The French Meadow began in 1988 as a bakery and received a conditional use permit for 24 hour operations that year. The bakery added a restaurant in 1991. The applicant is now proposing to eliminate the bakery use and expand the restaurant, but will not be adding entertainment.

For a restaurant with limited entertainment, the parking is calculated based on the gross floor area. The proposed restaurant expansion will require ten additional parking spaces. The gross floor area of the restaurant is proposed to increase by 4,779 square feet, from 6,381 square feet to 11,160 square feet.

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Customer seating area will be increasing a total of 2,410 square feet. Below is a table outlining the internal changes and the required parking:

Current use	GFA	Parking req'd	Proposed Use	GFA	Parking req'd
Bakery	9,966	10	Vacant	5,074	4
Office	2,940	4	Office	3,053	4
Restaurant	6,381	19	Restaurant	11,160	35
Total	19,287	33	Total	19,287	43

To expand the restaurant, the applicant will be required to provide ten additional parking spaces. The applicant is applying for the bicycle incentive, which will further reduce the required parking by 10% (4 spaces). Therefore, the minimum required off-street parking for the proposed restaurant expansion is 6 spaces after applying the bicycle incentive. The applicant has pursued the possibility of entering into additional shared parking agreements with other uses in the area, but has not met with success. In order for the applicant to enter into a shared parking with any nearby properties would require a rezoning of the property from C4 to C2 to meet the requirements of chapter 541, Off-Street Parking and Loading. The applicant was pursuing that rezoning and a shared parking agreement with the nearest available lot at 2640/2650 Lyndale Avenue South at the end of the block along 27th Street West; however, even with the rezoning and the shared parking agreement, the applicant would still be three spaces short of meeting all required parking through the shared parking agreement. Therefore, the applicant decided to pursue the parking variance, and is applying for a variance to reduce the additional required parking from 6 spaces to 0 to allow for the restaurant expansion.

Per the applicant, the French Meadow Bakery and Café has met with the Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Association's Zoning and Planning Committee, which voted 5-1 in support of the variance. The full board is set to meet on May 18, 2012. As of the time of the writing of this report, staff has received one comment from a concerned neighbor which is attached to this report. Staff will forward comments, if any are received, at the Board of Adjustment meeting.

VARIANCE: to reduce the required number of off-street parking spaces from 6 spaces to 0 to allow for the expansion of a sit-down restaurant within an existing building.

Findings Required by the Minneapolis Zoning Code:

1. Practical difficulties exist in complying with the ordinance because of circumstances unique to the property. The unique circumstances were not created by persons presently having an interest in the property and are not based on economic considerations alone.

The circumstances upon which the variance is requested are unique to the property. Any change of use in the property will require additional parking from the Limited Production and Processing Bakery use that was there before – Limited and Production and Processing has one of the lowest parking requirements of all commercial uses, and even adding a general retail use would require additional parking per the zoning code. Not being able to use an existing building is a practical difficulty. There is no room on the site for additional parking. The applicant is attempting to mitigate the effects of the increased parking requirement by adding additional bicycle parking spaces.

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Truck traffic will be reduced as well – the French Meadow had three vans and one small truck for their deliveries as well as two full semi-trailers delivering flour daily to the site. The semis were forced to maneuver on Lyndale due to the constraints of the site, and removing those trucks and the daily deliveries will improve traffic and safety on Lyndale.

2. The property owner or authorized applicant proposes to use the property in a reasonable manner that will be in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance and the comprehensive plan.

The purpose of parking and loading regulations is to recognize the parking and loading needs of uses and structures, to enhance the compatibility between parking and loading areas and their surroundings, and to regulate the number, design, maintenance, use and location of off-street parking and loading spaces and the driveways and aisles that provide access and maneuvering space. The regulations promote flexibility and recognize that excessive off-street parking conflicts with the city's policies related to transportation, land use, urban design, and sustainability. Staff believes that the applicant is proposing to use the property in a reasonable manner that will be in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance and comprehensive plan. The property is located along a commercial corridor with excellent transit availability. In addition, the applicant is proposing to provide additional bicycle parking to promote alternative modes of transportation. The reuse of an existing building is also in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance and the comprehensive plan.

A sit-down restaurant is generally pedestrian in nature and staff believes that many patrons of the use will use alternative forms of transportation including walking, biking, and busing. There is a transit stop on the block served by a bus line with 15-minute headways throughout most of the day (the #4) as well as a limited stop bus during rush hour (the #113). The applicant is also proposing to add additional bicycle parking to further incentivize bicycle use.

3. The proposed variance will not alter the essential character of the locality or be injurious to the use or enjoyment of other property in the vicinity. If granted, the proposed variance will not be detrimental to the health, safety, or welfare of the general public or of those utilizing the property or nearby properties.

Staff believes that the granting of this variance would not negatively alter the essential character or be injurious to the use or enjoyment of other property in the area. The sit-down restaurant will be provided within the existing structure and the applicant is proposing to provide additional bicycle parking to help mitigate any automobile traffic issues. As previously mentioned, the property is located along a community corridor, and many of the patrons will arrive via alternate forms of transportation, including by transit, by bicycle, and by foot.

The elimination of the bakery use at this location will reduce large truck traffic, including maneuvering in the public right-of-way that was occurring, which will increase safety along Lyndale Avenue South. Staff does not believe that the proposed variance will be detrimental to the health, safety or welfare of the general public.

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendation of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division for the Variance:

The Community Planning and Economic Development Department - Planning Division recommends that the Board of Adjustment adopt the findings above and **approve** the variance to reduce the required number of off-street parking spaces from 6 spaces to 0 spaces for the expansion of a sit-down restaurant in an existing building for the property located at 2610 Lyndale Avenue South in the C4 General Commercial District, subject to the following condition of approval:

1. Bicycle racks shall be provided to accommodate no fewer than eleven (11) bicycles on the property and shall meet the minimum requirements for short term bicycle parking. The bicycle parking may be located in the public right-of-way with permission of the city engineer.

Attachments:

1. Applicant's statement of use and findings
2. Correspondence from resident
3. Zoning map
4. Site plans/floor plans
5. Photographs